

## **ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY**

Philosophy 347C = Classics 347C

Spring 2012

Monday-Wednesday, 2:30-4:00

Earth and Planetary Sciences 203

### **Instructor**

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hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1-2, and by appointment

### **Course Description, Prerequisites, and Goals**

This course examines the high-water marks of philosophy in ancient Greece and Rome, focusing primarily on Plato and Aristotle. A wide range of philosophical problems will be discussed, including the nature of the good life, the justification of knowledge, and the ultimate nature of mind and world. Attention will be paid to how these problems unfolded in their historical context and to how the ancient treatments of them compare to contemporary efforts.

This semester's iteration of the course focuses on two tendencies in ancient Greek philosophy, the first to insist that a human life lived well must be philosophical, that is, must be dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom, and the second to insist that pursuing wisdom requires understanding the natural world and in some way living in agreement with that world. Though all the philosophers we will study manifest both tendencies, they do not all agree about the details of what wisdom is, what the best explanation of the natural world is, or how one might live in agreement with the world.

The course presupposes some familiarity with philosophical reasoning, and so requires a previous course in philosophy. But especially motivated students should be able to get up to speed, especially if they already have some familiarity with the ancient Greek world, and they should contact the instructor for permission to enroll.

The goals of the course are primarily threefold. First, its students should gain some understanding of ancient Greek philosophy, that is, some historical knowledge. Second, the students should gain some improved understanding of some central philosophical questions, including what philosophy is, how one should live, what knowledge is, and what there is in the world, by grappling with ancient answers to these questions. Third, students should improve their skills of reading, thinking, and writing.

## Procedures and Requirements

This course includes a page on Blackboard, the online course-management system that WUSTL is phasing in. (Our course is part of the pilot program.) The syllabus and other important materials, including the assignments, are or will be posted on Blackboard; there will be discussion forums for the course on Blackboard; and you will submit all of your assignments uploading them on Blackboard.

To access the course's site on Blackboard, go to <http://bb.wustl.edu>, and log in. You should be given a "My Blackboard" page with a list of your courses, and you should be able to click on Ancient Philosophy to get its home page. You'll find links there for the syllabus and other important handouts, and links for the assignments and forums (most of which are not yet active).

IMPORTANT: I've set up my page for the course so that your submissions will be anonymous. That is, I will see them in relation to your student ID numbers and not in relation to your names. I have read enough about implicit bias to want to be able to grade the assignments and return them to you without knowing anything about who wrote what. But this requires that the files you upload not have your name anywhere in their file-names or in their contents. Identify yourself by ID number in the file and choose file-names that reflect the assignment and not your name. The assignments themselves will remind you of these guidelines, and failure to follow them will be penalized.

Grades will be based on four factors.

(1) Participation. The class sessions will proceed by a blend of lecture and discussion, and all students are expected to participate. In addition, there will be discussion forums online, in Blackboard, and students are expected to participate in these forums. Students will be graded based on their attendance in class and their participation in class sessions and in online discussions. The quality of your questions and comments is more important than their quantity, but of course, one way to make good contributions is not to be shy about making several contributions, since that strategy increases your chances that one or two will be especially good. If you are participating in class, you are not required to participate online, and vice versa, but you are welcome to participate in both venues. I will be **assessing participation** for every three-session unit (and three times for the longer third and fourth units), and each of the nine total assessments will be worth a possible ten points. (Note that there will be nine distinct discussion forums online, one for each assessment period.) Ten more points can be gained by completing **Assignment 1**, which is due **Friday, January 27, at noon**. The assignment is a gimme, and any careful effort will earn ten points (a careless effort will earn eight; gibberish will earn six). How will the nine assessments go? Like this:

Attentive; at least one or two especially good comments or questions	10
Attentive; at least one or two helpful comments or questions	9
Attentive; some attempt to participate	8

Attentive; does not participate OR is absent	7
Multiply absent	5
Entirely absent	0

Let me clarify a couple of these terms. "Helpful" comments and questions draw explicitly on the text (by citing the relevant passage or passages). "Especially good" comments and questions are not only helpful but show some insight into what is not obvious or draw some connection that is not obvious. I encourage you to consider the posted guidelines for studying to help prepare you to make helpful and insightful comments and questions. Last, and perhaps most important, as I understand the notion, one can be "absent" while sitting in the classroom if one is paying attention to things other than the class discussion. Trying to "multi-task" with one's phone or laptop counts as being absent; allowing one's phone to ring does, too. On the other hand, there are excusable absences that do not count as being "absent." If one misses class for a very good foreseeable reason, this will be excused whenever I have been sent evidence of the reason well before class. If one misses class for a very good unforeseeable reason, it will be excused if I am sent evidence of the reason after the class. Last, the first three unexcused absences in the semester are not counted as absences. If you are feeling unwell, stay home and get well. If you are feeling so unwell that you need to miss more than three class sessions, you need to see a doctor (and let the doctor contact me) or take better care of yourself. *Participation is worth 100 points total*

(2) Two short papers. There are two essay assignments, each for an essay of 1250-1750 words will be due, one for Unit Two or Three (Assignment 2) and one for Unit Four (Assignment 3). Starting on Wednesday, February 8, a set of paper topics will be posted each week for papers that are due the following Monday, at noon. (This deadline is firm, and any paper submitted late will be downgraded at the rate of 10 points per 24 hours or fraction thereof.) You are free to choose the week that you write, but you must write on one of the topics assigned that week. Also, you must write one of your papers on Plato (as any one of **Assignment 2A-2E**) and the other on Aristotle (as any one of **Assignment 3A-3E**). Please use your freedom wisely, and write when you have the time and interest. I will try to return papers in class within seven days after they are submitted, but I may fail to be this prompt if many people write in the same week. Since you may want to have your first paper back in your hands before you write your second paper, you need to know that I cannot promise a speedy return on your first paper if you write it late in unit three. You should consult the posted writing guidelines before planning your essay; they explain the grading priorities. *100 points each*

(4) A final exam. The exam, which will not be online, but will be done the old-fashioned way, in blue books, will be divided into three parts. The first part will require identifying a set of quotations from our reading, the second will require writing an interpretive essay about some general topic in the course, and the third will require analyzing an argument that is from one of our authors but not from one of our required readings. You will be allowed to consult your texts (but not your notes) during the exam, and the lists of quotations and topics will give you some options. Moreover, the exam is not designed to stump anyone. There is a final exam in this course only because I want to encourage you to review the entire semester's material and to

reflect on the general themes of the course. In my experience, the goals of this course are reached much more fully if students are forced at the end to review and reflect. *200 points*

Five hundred total points are possible. I will set the benchmarks for quality grades after I have seen the final distribution of points, but it will be at least as favorable as the standard scale (97% for an A+, 93% for an A, 90% for an A-, 87% for a B+, 83% for a B, etc.). In order to pass, students taking the class pass/fail must score a total of at least 350 points.

Two final notes. First, all students should know that help is available from the Disability Resource Center (935-4062) and the Center for Advanced Learning (935-5970), and I am happy to cooperate with them.

Second, any student whose work does not conform to the University policy on academic integrity, printed in the Course Listings, will automatically fail the course, and will be subject to University disciplinary action. Everything you turn in must be your own work—you must provide citations not just when you borrow the exact words of another but also when you borrow another's idea—and it must have been written specifically for this class. I take this rule very seriously; if I were the academic integrity committee, the University would expel you for work that does not conform to the policy on academic integrity.

### **Syllabus of Readings and Assignments**

The following required texts are available in the bookstore in Mallinckrodt:

Ackrill, ed. A New Aristotle Reader (Princeton), ISBN 0691020434

Cooper, ed. Plato: Complete Works (Hackett), ISBN 0872203492

Curd, ed. A Presocratics Reader, 2nd. ed. (Hackett), ISBN 9781603843058

Inwood and Gerson, eds. Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings, 2nd ed. (Hackett), ISBN 0872203786

Please use exactly these editions, to minimize confusion about the assignments and worries about the translations.

W      1-18                      Introduction to Ancient Greek Philosophy  
    After the first class, please review The Presocratics, pp. viii-ix and 1-10.

### **UNIT ONE: "PRESOCRATIC" PHILOSOPHY**

The works of the earliest Greek philosophers are lost, but some people later in antiquity quoted from these works or reported on their contents. Thus, we have "fragments" of the lost works (quotations) and "testimonies" (paraphrases or descriptions) concerning what they said. By careful study of these fragments and testimonies, we can reconstruct what the earliest Greek philosophers were saying. In this course, we will be reading the fragments of two early Greek

philosophers who had a lasting impact, and all citations of these philosophers should be to the fragment and, if applicable, line numbers, as they are enumerated in our Presocratics Reader.

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|---|------|--|
| M | 1-23 | Heraclitus, pp. 39-53 of <u>A Presocratics Reader</u>  |
| W | 1-25 | Parmenides, pp. 55-63 of <u>A Presocratics Reader</u>  |
| F | 1-27 | <b>Assignment 1 due at noon</b>  |
| M | 1-30 | Parmenides, pp. 55-63 of <u>A Presocratics Reader</u> (continued)<br><b>Participation assessment 1 (by instructor)</b> |

### UNIT TWO: SOCRATES-PLATO

Socrates of Athens, for many the prototypical philosopher, wrote nothing, but he influenced scores of young Athenians, many of whom wrote dialogues that featured him as a character. He is featured in most of Plato's dialogues, though he says very different things in different ones. Many scholars think that some of Plato's dialogues represent Socrates more or less as he really was and that others make Socrates say things that the real Socrates never would have said. In unit two, we'll read two works that capture what many people think is the historical Socrates. Note that Plato's works are standardly cited by "Stephanus numbers," which are printed in the margins of every major text and translation of his works; these numbers represent the pagination of the first great edition of Plato's works in printed books, by Henri Estienne (Latinized as "Stephanus") in 1578. In this class, all citations of Plato's works should be to the Stephanus numbers.

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|---|-----|--|
| W | 2-1 | Plato, <u>Euthyphro</u> , esp. 2a-11e  |
| M | 2-6 | Plato, <u>Euthyphro</u> , esp. 11e-15e   |
| W | 2-8 | Plato, <u>Apology of Socrates</u><br><b>Participation assessment 2 (by instructor)</b> |

### UNIT THREE: PLATO

We now turn to Plato's dialogues in which the character Socrates says things that seem not to reflect what the real Socrates thought. This will be nothing but a glimpse of Plato's remarkably inventive and varied contributions to philosophy; his works are so imaginative and fertile that it has been said that all of western philosophy is nothing but footnotes to Plato. Again, in this class, all citations of Plato's works should be to the Stephanus numbers.

- |   |      |  |
|---|------|--|
| M | 2-13 | Plato, <u>Meno</u> 70a-86c<br><b>Assignment 2A due at noon</b> |
|---|------|--|

W	2-15	Plato, <u>Meno</u> 86c-100b <b>Participation assessment 3 (by instructor)</b>
M	2-20	Plato, <u>Phaedo</u> 57a-72e <b>Assignment 2B due at noon</b>
W	2-22	Plato, <u>Phaedo</u> 72e-95a
M	2-27	Plato, <u>Phaedo</u> 95a-118a <b>Assignment 2C due at noon</b> <b>Participation assessment 4 (by instructor)</b>
W	2-29	Plato, <u>Timaeus</u> 17a-47e
M	3-5	Plato, <u>Timaeus</u> 47e-69a <b>Assignment 2D due at noon</b>
W	3-7	Plato, <u>Timaeus</u> 69a-92c <b>Participation assessment 5 (by instructor)</b>
M	3-12	NO CLASS - Spring Break
W	3-14	NO CLASS - Spring Break
M	3-19	NO CLASS - Professor out of town <b>Assignment 2E due at noon</b>

#### UNIT FOUR: ARISTOTLE

Aristotle studied in Plato's Academy for some eighteen years, and his way of explaining the world permanently changed philosophy, especially after his works became part of the medieval Scholastic synthesis of Christianity and philosophy. Aristotle's works are standardly cited by the "Bekker numbers" that appear in the margins of every reputable edition and translation. "Bekker numbers" reflect the pagination of the edition of Aristotle's works put together by I. Bekker in the nineteenth century. In this class, all citations of Aristotle's works should be to the Bekker numbers.

W	3-21	Aristotle, <u>Categories</u> 1-5
M	3-26	Aristotle, <u>Physics</u> I 1, I 7, and II 1-3 <b>Assignment 3A due at noon</b>

- W 3-28 Aristotle, Physics II 4-9  
**Participation assessment 6 (by instructor)**
- M 4-2 Aristotle, On the Soul II 1-3  
**Assignment 3B due at noon**
- W 4-4 Aristotle, Parts of Animals I 1 and 5  
**Participation assessment 7 (by instructor)**
- M 4-9 Aristotle, Metaphysics I 1 and IV 1-4  
**Assignment 3C due at noon**
- W 4-11 Aristotle, Metaphysics VI 1 and XII 1-5
- M 4-16 Aristotle, Metaphysics XII 6-10  
**Assignment 3D due at noon**  
**Participation assessment 8 (by instructor)**

#### UNIT FIVE: HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY

Historians use the word 'Hellenistic' to describe the Greek-speaking world during the time between the division of Alexander the Great's Macedonian empire (on Alexander's death in 323 BCE) and the birth of the Roman Empire with Octavian's victory at Actium in 31 BCE. During this period, Plato's Academy continued to flourish, but its leaders decided that the real lesson of Plato's writing was skepticism, that is, the view that one should suspend judgment about everything and continue inquiring (skeptikos=inquirer). There were also a few followers of Aristotle, but they were not of much philosophical consequence. The important philosophers outside the Academy followed either Epicurus or Zeno of Citium. (Zeno and his followers were dubbed "Stoics" because they gathered in the Athenian agora at the Stoa poikilē (=painted portico); followers of Epicurus were just called Epicureans.) Epicureans, Stoics, and skeptics were all enormously influential on the subsequent history of western philosophy.

Unfortunately, though, their influence depends upon summaries written at the very end of the Hellenistic period or after. Writings by Epicurus, Zeno, and other great Hellenistic philosophers are largely lost. (Epicurus' three surviving letters and two collections of his maxims are exceptions.) We rely on the summaries and quotations provided by later authors such as Cicero (106-43 BCE) and Diogenes Laertius (3rd c. CE). This semester, we will look only at Epicurus, and briefly. 'IG' here prefaces page numbers in our text of readings about Hellenistic philosophy.

- W 4-18 Diogenes Laertius, excerpts on the life of Epicurus (IG 3-5)  
Epicurus, Letter to Menoecus (IG 28-31)  
Epicurus, The Principal Doctrines (IG 32-36)  
Cicero, excerpts on Epicurean ethical views (IG 56-63)

- M 4-23 Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus (IG 5-19)  
Cicero, excerpts on the Epicurean view of atomic  
motion (IG 45-49)  
Lucretius, On the Nature of Things 2.216-293 (IG 64-65)  
**Assignment 3E due at noon**
- W 4-25 (Discussion of Epicurus continues)  
**Participation assessment 9 (by instructor)**
- TBA Optional Review Session
- M 5-7 **Final Exam**, 3:30-5:30 pm, regular room